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The last mention of any of them by the family name in the Four Masters occurs at A.D. 1180, where is recorded the death of Mulmurry McConnemoght, "*chief senior of Ireland.*"

We have, then, in the history of this family, as brought before us in the above extracts, the following facts:—First, an Abbot of Louth, father to a Primate of Armagh. Then this Primate, father to another Abbot of Louth, who was, in his turn, father to the Anchorite Owen. And Owen the Anchorite was father to Luchairen, or Luachan, another Anchorite; who was again father to Egertach, *Erenach* of the Little Church, Clonmacnoise. And Egertach was father to Donoghue, Bishop of Clonmacnoise. And Bishop Donoghue begat Donogh, Lector (*i.e.*, *Professor of Divinity*, according to Colgan, *Trias Thaum.* p. 293.) of Clonmacnoise; who was father to Joseph, spiritual adviser to Clonmacnoise; who was father of Conn-na-mbocht, head of the Culdees, and Anchorite of Clonmacnoise; who was father to Maelfinnen, abbot [?] of the same place; who was father to Cormac, another abbot of the same place; who was father to Keleher, learned senior of Clonmacnoise, &c., &c.

In other words, in the twelve generations, according to lineal descent, preceding Keleher, we have, 1 Abbot of Armagh and Primate of all Ireland; 2 Abbots of Louth, and 2 of Clonmacnoise, 1 Head of Culdees, or Prior, at Clonmacnoise, 1 Bishop there, 1 Divinity Professor and Anchorite, 2 other Anchorites, 1 *Annchura*, spiritual adviser, or confessor, and 1 *Erenach*. The office of *Erenach*, at the time of the plantation of Ulster, was held by laymen, at least persons who received only the "*prima tonsura*;" but in earlier times it would seem to have been a spiritual or clerical one, as much as that of the abbot. Sometimes indeed the two were identified. Thus, at A.D. 834, the Four Masters make mention of Brasal, "*Erenach—i. e. Abbot of Kildua [Kilglin, Co. Meath]*—and other churches."

Our illustrations of the state of those matters at Clonmacnoise, to which the reader's attention has now been directed, might easily be extended further; but on what relates to that one place we have, perhaps, dwelt sufficiently for the present. In a future paper we hope to throw some additional light on the subject, from the notices connected with other ancient Irish religious foundations which occur in our old annals; and we think that we shall be able to exhibit sufficient indications that in them also a similar system of family succession to ecclesiastical offices, or application to them of the principle of Tanistry, more or less prevailed. This is indeed what might be expected, as a natural conclusion from the evidence already adduced. For Clonmacnoise was one of the most famous of all those old Irish establishments; Armagh itself scarcely occupying a position of more prominence or importance in the Irish annals; and it was therefore but natural, that a system so cherished as we have seen at Clonmacnoise, or in the family above described, for at least 350 years, from the time of Abbot Gorman, who died in A.D. 753, to that of Abbot Cormac, who died in 1103, should be approved of and adopted into use in places of lesser note also.

R. K.

TALK OF THE ROAD—NO. XII.

"Well, Pat, did you get leave to stay in Kilcommon?" said Jem, when they went on the road.

"Deed I did, then," said Pat, "and its peace we are getting in Kilcommon now."

"And how is that come about?" said Jem.

"Why, I hear tell," said Pat, "that Father John got a letter from the Bishop, telling him he was bringing scandal on the Church, and that every thing is to be kept quiet till it's forgot."

"And your not going to turn, Pat?" said Jem.

"Deed no, Jem," said Pat, "sure I was never thinking of turning; what do I know about it? Sure I only want to read the Catholic Bible, and try to learn something out of it. But where were you, Jem, since I saw you?"

"Why, then, I was at the wake," said Jem.

"And whose wake was it?" said Pat.

"Well, then, it was old Molly Kearney's," said Jem.

"Is it her, the creature," said Pat, "and where would the likes of her get a wake? Sure, don't I know that he had nothing to live on these ten years only the fifteen pence a week that Mr. Owens allowed her out of the Church money, and she gives three pence a week of that for her lodging, and who would be bothered waking her? Deed, Mrs. Owens was mighty good to her, and gave her her bit often; but sure Mr. Owens wouldn't be going to pay for the pipes and whisky?"

"Well, you may say that," said Jem; "but I'll tell you how it was. I was going past old Ned Flanagan's, where she lodged, one evening, and he called me in, and told me she was dead, the creature, and he said he was'n't going to have any sense of waking, only just what was wanting; and so he asked me to go down to the shop, at the cross roads, for a halfpenny candles, and a pen'orth

of snuff, and he said that would do. So I went, and got the candles, and the snuff; and when the candles was lighted, who should come in, but old Judy Brannigan, that has the scapular, and sells the books; well, down she goes on her knees, you know, and begins with the Latin, and 'deed she seemed to handle it mighty clever; and when she was done, 'Judy, dear,' says I; 'what is it at all?' 'Well, I believe it's a psalm,' says she. 'but I'm sure it's the right thing,' says she. 'And, Judy, dear,' says I, 'do you know what it means at all?' says I. 'How would I,' says she, 'when it's in the Latin it is?' 'And what is it good for?' says I. 'Why, it's good for old Molly Kearney's soul,' says she. 'And wouldn't it be good for our souls, too?' says I. 'Well, in course it would,' says she. 'And would the meaning of it do any harm to them that understood it?' says I. 'No, sure it wouldn't,' says she. 'Well,' says I, 'and wouldn't it be better for us to have it in English, the way we could understand it?' 'And is it jumper you're going to turn?' says she, 'to be talking that way of the blessed Latin; sure where would be the use of larnin', at all, if English was as good for the soul as Latin?' 'Well, I'm thinking, Judy,' says I, 'our souls wouldn't be the worse for understanding good words.' So, with that, old Ned Flanagan comes over, and he says, 'Deed, I'm thinking this long time, there's sense in that,' says he; 'and I can't help thinking sometimes, where's the great use in my going to Mass, when I can't understand one word, good nor bad, till the scoulding begins.'"

"Aye," says Pat, "that's the sermon he meant, sure enough; and, I wonder what's the reason they don't scould in Latin, too. Sure, if we listen to the prayers in Latin, why wouldn't it do to listen to the scoulding in Latin, too? It's a poor way with us to understand nothing but the scoulding; it ought to make us read the Bible anyway to try and know something—but go on with the story, Jem."

"Well," said Jem, "when old Judy saw that we were both again here, she began taking a pinch of the snuff; and, I says, 'isn't it you that has the blessed scapular, Judy,' says I. 'Deed, it's myself, says she, 'that has. 'And what is it good for,' says I. 'Why, it's good to die in to be sure,' says she, 'and it's I that hopes to get it on in time,' says she, 'if my senses is spared to me,' says she. 'And what's the good of dying in it,' says I. 'Why, to be sure,' says she, 'dout you know? didn't the Blessed Virgin say herself, when she gave it, that them that dies in it shall never go to hell, and if they go to purgatory at all, that she'll go down there herself the very next Saturday after they die, and let them out herself.' 'And where did you hear that at all,' says I; 'is it in the Bible it is?' 'Sure, how would I know if it's there,' says she, 'but isn't it in the treatise on the scapular that I have at home,' says she. 'And you wont put it on till you are dying,' says I. 'No,' says she, 'sure I wont.' 'And how will it be,' says I, 'if you wouldn't have the sense to put it on then,' says I; 'sure here's old Molly Kearney lying here,' says I, 'and she wasn't as old as you, and she was took quite sudden, and if she had a dozen scapulars in her box, would it be any good to her soul, when she wouldn't have time or senses to put one of them on her?' Well, now, the creature, I was a most sorry for saying it, when I saw how troubl'd she got in her mind at thinking of that. 'Oh, wirra,' says she, 'wont there be any good Christian near me at all to put it on me? Ochone,' says she, 'will I die with the scapular in the chest, at the foot of the bed there?' Well, when I saw the old creature take on so, I just says to her, 'did you never hear, Judy dear,' says I, 'that it's in the Bible, that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin? and sure,' says I, 'if he will put that on you his ownself, there will be no mistake about that, and wont that do?' says I. 'Och,' says she, 'what do I know about that, but, dont I know about the blessed scapular? but, ochone,' says she, 'who will put it on me at all? sure, I'm a poor, lone creature, that lives by myself, without kith or kin, and who will put it on me at all?' Well, I couldn't help thinking that time, that it was the poor case for an old creature to be taking such trouble about her soul, and knowing nothing of the blood of Jesus Christ to put away her sins; and isn't it the poor thing for the priests to be leaving an old creature that way, that will be dying like old Molly some of these days? And don't they all hold up poor Judy for the most religious woman in the country, and the surest of heaven? Well, it makes me think more nor ever that reading the Bible is what the people want."

"Well, but while I was talking to old Judy, there came a noise at the door, and when it opens, there was all the wildest boys in the country coming in; and old Ned Flanagan goes for'd to meet them, and—'What do you want here?' says he. 'We're come to the wake,' says they. 'Well, you'll get no waking here,' says he; 'so you may be off with yourselves.' Well, they swore they'd have some of the fun over old Molly: 'And what did you or the likes of you care for old Molly when she was living,' says he; 'and what right have you to fun over her now?' says he; 'so be off with yourselves out of that,' says he. Well, with that they gave him a deal of bad language, and they pushed by him, and drove into the house, and began screeching for the pipes and the

whiskey, for they said they had a right to have some diversion when there was a corp in the house. Well, with that old Ned went up into the inner room, and he fetched out his scythe with him (for he's a mower by trade), and he swore—'By this and by that,' says he, 'if they didn't be off with themselves out of that,' says he, 'he'd shear the heads off them, like mice,' says he. Well, deed if I hadn't caught hold of his arm, I think he'd have had the arm off one of them anyway; and when the boys saw that, they weren't long in being off with themselves."

"Well, when they were gone," says I to Ned, "would you let me read a bit quit to you," says I. So he said he'd like that well; so I just took out my Bible, for I had it in my pocket, and I just read to them about Jesus Christ coming to Mary and Martha when their brother was dead, and how kind he was to them, and how he even cried like themselves at the grave; how he told them he was the Resurrection and the life, and that if they would believe in Him, he would raise them up to life again when they were dead, and how he called Lazarus out of the grave before their eyes, to show that he could do it, and that He would do it if they believed in Him; and old Judy, the creature, she come and listened to it all, and said 'of all the reading ever she heard, it was the purtiest,' and, indeed, Ned was mighty well pleased too, and his wife, and they said 'they'd often be glad to hear the like, and that it was a deal decenter than pipes and whiskey when there was a corp in the house;' and, indeed, I could not help thinking then that if the priests would try and stop the waking, and advise the people to have a little reading like Christians, it would be doing more good to the people than setting them to stone the Scripture reader."

"Well," said Pat, "it surely would; but I'm afraid they won't try that. But how would we know anything more about that scapular, or how did it come out at all, when there's nothing about it in the Bible?"

"Well," said Jem, "I think I know a man that has the treatise on the scapular that old Judy spoke about, and I'll try and borrow it."

"Well," said Pat, "It would be a good thing to get it and read it, and see if it's like the Bible at all."

So if they find out anything more about the scapular, we will try and have it for our readers.

AURICULAR CONFESSION, PART II.

In our last number we laid before our readers some of our reasons, taken from the very eminent Roman Catholic writers, Maldonatus, Natalis Alexander, Peter Lombard, Gratian, Cardinal Cajetan, St. Bonaventure, Alexander de Hales, Gabriel Biel, and others, proving, as we conceive, very clearly, that the *Universal Church* has *not* always understood that sacramental or secret confession to a priest was *instituted by our Blessed Lord*, and, therefore, of Divine right necessary to salvation; but, on the contrary, that there is no point which was more freely discussed for many centuries, or upon which a greater difference of opinion existed for more than 1,000 years after the times of our Lord and his Apostles. We now proceed to examine whether it be historically true that the Catholic Church hath always observed, from the beginning, the practice of confessing all sins secretly to a priest alone, as decreed by the Council of Trent; admitting that such a practice would be entitled to great weight, even though its institution by our Blessed Lord be incapable of proof, as we think we have proved it to be, by the admission of no small number of the most eminent divines of the Roman Catholic Church.

We would first observe, that the proof of the affirmative lies on those who assert the fact to be as stated—viz., that such a practice has existed in the Church since the times of primitive Christianity; and we would next ask our readers to bear in mind what the exact thing called in question by the Church of England is. The Church of England does not deny that the *public* confession of sins in the Church was in very early use, nor does she deny the lawfulness or usefulness of *voluntary private* confession, either to a pious friend, or discreet minister. There is, doubtless, the highest authority—viz., that of the Holy Scriptures—for the practice of confession of sins* to one another, which no one contends excludes confession to a priest, any more than does the concurrent injunction—"Pray for one another;" and so far is the Church of England from disapproving of *voluntary private* confession, that the form of *exhortation* in the Book of Common Prayer, prescribed by the Rubric, to be read when the minister gives warning for the celebration of the Holy Communion, contains an express encouragement for the use of it.

The only matter in dispute therefore is, whether the practice of private confession to a priest was *enjoined by the Church* from the earliest times, as a matter of necessary discipline, on all its members; or, to state the matter a little

* St. James c. v. 16.

† "And because it is requisite that no man should come to the Holy Communion but with a full trust in God's mercy, and with a quiet conscience; therefore, if there be any of you who, by this means—(viz., self-examination previously mentioned) cannot quiet his own conscience herein, but requirerth further comfort or counsel, let him come to me, or to some other discreet and learned minister of God's Word and open his grief: that by the ministry of God's Holy Word he may receive the benefit of absolution, together with ghostly (spiritual) counsel and advice, to the quieting of his conscience, and avoiding of all scruple and doubtfulness."—Book of Common Prayer.

more fully, the matter to be proved by Roman Catholics is this—not merely the primitive *existence* of sacerdotal confession (such as may now be lawfully practised in the Church of England), but also the primitive *enforcement* of a periodical auricular confession, through the medium of which every mortal sin, even though, by reason of its having been secretly committed, occasioning no public scandal, and even though committed against what Protestants call the 10th Commandment of the Decalogue, is required to be fully stated to a priest, under the penalties of imperative religious obligation, and with the associated doctrine, that any voluntary concealment is absolute sin.

We may hereafter point out and illustrate more fully the broad difference between auricular confession, as practised and enjoined by the Church of Rome, and what the Church of England allows and recommends, which is not auricular confession, in the conventional sense of that phrase, but merely the friendly and spontaneous consulting of a pious and judicious divine—by those labouring under some particular distress of conscience. Our present object, however, is the historical, not the theological view of the subject, and to that we must now confine ourselves.

We must begin by observing what, no doubt, has struck every careful reader of the Holy Scriptures, that, in the history therein recorded of the life and ministry of our Blessed Lord, there is no trace of his enjoining his followers to confession by a particular enumeration of their sins and their circumstances—though we find him there daily conversing with sinners, reproving, instructing, healing and forgiving them. He told the woman of Samaria all that ever she did, but he never exhorted her to auricular confession; he pardoned the woman taken in adultery, when he had made her accusers shrink away; but he demanded no confession of her guilt. He pardoned the sins of the man sick of the palsy on seeing his faith, without requiring any confession; and in the historical records of the ministry of the Apostles, we find them going about preaching the gospel, calling men to repentance, erecting and governing churches; but we find no instance of their sitting down in a confessor's chair, for penitents to tell them in their ear, the story of their vicious lives, as a matter of sacramental and necessary obligation; while, as we have shown, one of the Apostles themselves—Saint James—expressly inculcates the duty of confessing their faults one to another, and praying for one another, that they might be healed. Leaving the supporters of auricular confession to provide proof, if they can (which we shall gladly insert in our pages), that ecclesiastical history provides proof which sacred history does not, of the truth of the proposition which it lies on them affirmatively to establish, we shall proceed to give some account of by what steps and degrees we conceive auricular confession to have crept into the Church, at a much later period than the primitive ages of Christianity.

In the first ages, when Christian churches were founded in the midst of heathen nations, public scandalous offenders after baptism, and especially those who, through timidity or want of faith, relapsed into the practices of heathen idolatry, were, by the discipline of the Church, brought to public penance, which was generally called *Exomologesis*.

This word *Exomologesis*, in the original Greek, properly, no doubt, signifies confession, but in no way includes the idea of *secret* confession; and, on the contrary, is commonly used by the fathers as including the whole matter of repentance in all its parts, and especially of public penitential confession of gross and scandalous sin, made to God in the Church, in the presence of the assembled congregation. We shall presently exemplify and prove this more fully.

The necessity of this penitential rigour in the early Church, arose out of the public dishonour which was brought on Christianity by the inconstancy and misconduct of some who professed it, at a time when large numbers of converts from heathenism were admitted into the Church, and the Church suffered externally from the reproaches brought upon it by such inconsistency. Though the Apostles gave no rules about such matters, but avoiding or excommunicating the guilty persons, yet it was natural and fitting that the Church should resolve, as far as it was possible, to prevent such scandalous offences among them; with that view the actions of professing Christians were narrowly watched; their faults, especially such as led to scandal on the Church, complained of, and then if they confessed them, or were convicted of them, a severe and rigorous discipline was enforced before they were restored to communion, that their enemies might see how far Christians were from encouraging either immoral lives, or any compliance with Gentile idolatry; any tendency to which was looked upon as a degree of apostasy, and punished accordingly. This led to the framing of the Penitential Canons, which never extended, in the primitive Church, to all those sins which the Church of Rome now accounts *mortal*, and, therefore, necessary to be confessed; and required that the declaration of penitential sorrow should be made in the most public manner, the last and most solemn act of which was, when the bishop led the penitents from the entrance of the church up to the body of the congregation, where they prostrated themselves, and expressed their abhorrence of their faults in the most humiliating manner, by actions as well as words. The publicity, however, of such penances, in *facie Ecclesie*, in progress of time led to inconvenience, for the Church being now very numerous, a great many offences were brought publicly forward, which not only gave rise to sport and

ridicule for light and ill-disposed persons, and possibly, also, subjected the penitents to the severity of the Pagan criminal judge, but as some sins are of such a nature that they can scarcely be published without the risk of spreading a contagion, the good of the Church itself prohibited their publication before the face of the congregation.

This, in the time of the Emperor Decius, when persecution cruelly shook the Church, and numbers of her weaker members fell off in the storm, gave rise to a remarkable controversy, which, for some time, sadly distracted the Church, about the restoration or final rejection of those who had lapsed either in faith or public morals. We allude to the Novatian schism. The best and wisest of the Church, more merciful and considerate of human infirmity, were willing to receive those again, upon public repentance, over whom the temptation of fear had too much prevailed; but the Novatians, a great and zealous part of the Church in that age, looked with sterner eyes on them as desperate, who had once broken their baptismal vow, and would rather separate from the Church themselves than suffer such persons to be restored to it.

This Decian persecution was at its height about 250 years after our Saviour, and appears to have given rise to a new office in the Church, probably intended, if possible, to accommodate matters with the Novatian dissenters (who complained of the too compassionate facility of the Church in restoring offenders), by taking a middle course between an indiscriminate enforcement of that public penitential confession and humiliation which was called *exomologesis*, and the too lax mercy of restoring all who professed penitence, without insisting on confession and penitential discipline, as laid down in the canons.

This was the appointment of the office of public penitentiary, which appears to have originated about this period, and to have continued until the time of Nectarius, Bishop of Constantinople, who (we shall presently state for what reason) abolished it about 400 years after the time of our Saviour. The Novatians, so far from being satisfied, resisted this expedient as a new invention, an addition or supplement to the ancient rites of the Church; though the great majority of the orthodox appear to have acceded to it, as a wise and moderate mode of avoiding the scandals of too great lenity on the one hand, and indiscriminate publicity upon the other.

The Penitentiary was a public functionary, selected by the Church for his prudence, learning, and piety, to receive the confessions of all penitents (not, however, it would appear, under the seal of secrecy, as at present in the Church of Rome), but with power, after hearing privately the several cases of the penitents, to bring forward into public such of them as, in his judgment, might be made exemplary without incurring the dangers before referred to. There seems to have been no necessity imposed upon any one to disclose his secret sins even to the Penitentiary, much less to choose as his confidant any other priest, whom he might expect to be more complaisant than this selected public officer; but the office seems to have been no more than a prudent provision, in the existing state of the Church, to provide a safe help to men really penitent, and relieve perplexed and weak consciences, and especially to assist them in their preparation for the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, of which we shall give some proofs hereafter.

With this brief review of the result of our own researches into early ecclesiastical history, let us now see whether there be any semblance of authority, during the first three or four centuries, for holding that the practice of Auricular Confession was *enjoined* as a *necessary* duty by the Church in those times.

Our readers have, perhaps, become sufficiently familiar with the names of the early Fathers, to know that Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Tertullian are the most ancient of them, and nearly all, who lived during the first two centuries, whose works are extant.

Now, if secret confession of sins to a priest were the universal practice of the primitive Church, we should naturally look for some proof from their writings that such practice existed in those times.

Ignatius dates A.D. 106. Justin Martyr, A.D. 150. Irenæus, A.D. 180. Clemens Alexandrinus and Tertullian, A.D. 200. In the works of St. Ignatius, Justin Martyr, and Clement of Alexandria, there is absolutely no mention of confession at all; on the contrary, Clement, in speaking of the Eucharist, and the duty of self-examination before receiving it, expressly says, that a man's own conscience is his best director in that case.*

Cardinal Bellarmine (*De Pœnit.*, Lib. iii., c. 6, vol. iii., p. 443) cites two passages from Irenæus (*Adv. Hær.*, Lib. i., c. 9, and Lib. iii., c. 4) in the former of which, speaking of a worthless gnosticizing impostor, named Marcion, who induced many silly women to join his party, and then most infamously abused his influence over them, he goes on to state, that some of those women, on their repentance, made a full confession to the Church of the impurities into which they had been seduced, and spent *their whole time* in "*Exomologesis*," weeping and lamenting on account of their defilement.†

What "*Exomologesis*" means, we shall presently see.

* *Ἀριστερὸν γὰρ πρὸς τὴν ἀκριβὴ ἀίρεσιν τῇ καὶ φύσιν, ἢ συνείδεισι.*—Clem. Alex. lib. i. Strom., p. 318, Oxon. 1715.

† *Hæc sapientia conversæ ad Ecclesiam Dei confesse sunt, et secundum corpus exterminatas se ab eo velut cupidini, et inflammatis, valde se illum dilexisse. Cum magno labore fratres eam convertis-*

In the second passage referred to, Irenæus (*Adv. Hær.*, lib. iii., c. 4) says, that the *heretic* Cerdon often came into the Church, and made or performed *Exomologesis*,* but we can find nothing in Irenæus which has relation to auricular (or, as it is called by some, clancular) confession in secret to a priest. Tertullian has also some passages speaking of penitential confession, but they so clearly relate to public confession in the face of the Church, that Rhenanus, in his preface to Tertullian, says distinctly that there was no such thing as secret or clancular confession in use in Tertullian's time, which was a thing not so much as known in those days.†

Tertullian gives us, however, probably the best explanation of *EXOMOLOGESIS* which is to be found in any ancient Father, and which may assist in clearing up doubts which otherwise might be occasioned by its Greek etymology.

"This act, which is better and more commonly expressed by a Greek word (*ἑξομολόγησις*), is confession, whereby we acknowledge our sin *into the Lord*, not because he knoweth it not, but inasmuch as by confession satisfaction is ordered, from confession repentance springeth, by repentance God is appeased; wherefore *Exomologesis* is a discipline for the abasement and humiliation of man, enjoining such conversation as inviteth mercy; it directeth also, even in the matter of dress and food, to lie in sack-cloth and ashes, to hide his body in filthy garments, to cast down his spirit with mourning, to exchange for severe treatment the sins which he hath committed: for the most part, also, to cherish prayer by fasts, to groan, to weep, and to moan night and day unto the Lord his God; to throw himself upon the ground before the presbyters, and to fall on his knees before the beloved of God; to enjoin all the brethren to bear the message of his prayer for mercy."‡

This brings us down to the time of Origen and St. Cyprian, who lived some 50 years later, and who tell us that the confession of the penitent was, in their time also, made before the whole congregation, prostrating themselves on the ground, with weeping and humiliation, in the Church, and desiring the prayers of all the congregation, whereupon the bishop and clergy laid their hands on them, and reconciled them. In which description the Ecclesiastical Historian, Sozomen, concurs.§

This, no doubt, was generally only for such public and mortal sins as were dealt with by the old penitential canons, and especially the offences either of openly apostatizing from Christianity during times of persecution, or at least in secret committing or conniving at some act of Gentile idolatry, which amounted in thought, at least, to denying Christ, and sinning against the Holy Ghost; and it appears not to have extended, even in the way of *voluntary confession*, to what St. Cyprian calls *minora delicta*, as to which there is no intimation in St. Cyprian, that any persons were under an obligation, by the rules of the Church, to discover or confess them. We think, however, it does appear, both from St. Cyprian and Origen, that, though at first public confession was enjoined only for public offences, yet afterwards some men did voluntarily submit themselves to the Church's discipline, and undergo public confession and penance, to ease their consciences, and procure quiet of mind from the burden of sins, which, being done in secret, were not subject to the censures of the Church until they confessed them. And there is one place in St. Cyprian where he says, "That some confessed their very thoughts, though they had not proceeded to actual sin."||

We think it also appears that great sinners were strongly exhorted by St. Cyprian, Origen, and St. Ambrose to a voluntary public confession, as a wholesome and safe practice, though not as a matter of necessity, for St. Ambrose distinctly says—"Tears do wash the sin which the voice is ashamed to confess: weeping doth provide both for pardon and for shamefacedness; tears do speak our faults without horror, tears do confess our crime without offence to our shamefacedness."¶ In commenting on which the gloss in Gratian, who has inserted these words of St. Ambrose in his Decretum, says—"If for shame a man will not confess, tears alone do blot out his sins."**

sent, omne tempus in Exomologesi consummavit, plangens, et lamentans ob hæc, quam passa est ab hoc Mago, corruptelam."—Lib. i. c. 9, p. 60, Oxon. 1702.

* "Cerdon sæpe in Ecclesiam veniens, et Exomologesim faciens, sic consummavit, modo quidem latenter docens, modo verò Exomologesim faciens."—Lib. 3, c. 4, p. 206, Oxon. 1702.

† "Nihil illam de clancularia illa penitentia loqui, quæ est temporis, penitus ignoratur."—Beatus Rhenanus in præf. ad Tertul. de penitentia.

‡ "Exomologesis est, quæ delictum Dæmone nostrum confitetur: non, quidem, ut ignaro; sed quatenus satisfactio confessionis disciplinæ, confessione penitentia nascitur, penitentia Deus mitigatur. Itaque Exomologesis prosterndendi et humiliandi hominis disciplina est, conversationem injungens misericordie illi. De ipso quoque habitu atque victu mandat, sacco et cineri incubare, corpus sordibus obscurare, autum meroribus deiecere—jejunii preces Jere, ingomescere, lacrimarum et rugie dies noctesque ad Domum Deum tuum, Presbyteris advoles et caris Dei adgeniculari, omnibus fratribus legationes deprecationis sue injungere."—Tertul. de Pœnit., § ix., Opera, p. 127, Par. 1673.

§ St. Cyprian, Ep. 15, Oxon., p. 34, Origen, tom. 2, p. 37 Psalm, and Sozomen, lib. 7, c. 16.

|| St. Cyprian de lapsis, n. 23.

¶ Ambrose, lib. 10, comment in Luc. sec. 88, tom. 1, p. 1523—"Lavant lacrymæ delictum, quod voce pudor est confiteri et veniæ fletus consulunt et verecundia; lacrymæ sine horrore culpam loquuntur; lacrymæ crimen sine offensione verecundie confitentur."

** "Unde, etsi propter pudorem nolit quæ confiteri, solæ lacrymæ delent peccata."—Gloss, de pœnit. Grat. Decret. dia. i. c. 2.

To these we might add many similar testimonies. But to come a little farther down, to the time of St. Chrysostom, we find him speaking slightly of confession to men, and urging continual confession to God only. Out of many passages our space allows us to give only the following:—"It is not necessary," says he, "that thou shouldst confess in the presence of witnesses; let the inquiry of thy offences be made in thy thought: let this judgment be without a witness; let God only see thee confessing. Therefore, I entreat you, and beseech and pray you, that you would continually make your confession to God. . . . Unclasp thy conscience before God, and show thy words unto him, and of him ask a medicine: for although thou hold thy peace, he knoweth all. I do not say to thee bring thyself on the stage, nor accuse thyself to others; but I command thee to obey the prophet, saying—reveal thy ways unto the Lord—confess them before God, confess thy sins before the judge, praying, if not with the tongue, at least with thy memory, and so look to obtain mercy. But thou art ashamed to say that thou hast sinned. Confess thy faults, then, daily in thy prayers. For, do I say, confess them to thy fellow-servant, who may reproach thee therewith? Confess them to God, who healeth them."* In our last number, page 39, we cited St. Augustine to the same effect; and need we go further to show that whatever differences may exist in the writings of the early Fathers as to the advantages of seeking the aid of the discreet spiritual physician for advice and consolation (and St. Augustine himself, doubtless, in another passage,† urges on notorious offenders, whose crimes had bred open scandal, that private confession to God was not sufficient, but that they should also make public acknowledgment, and apply to the power of the Church, publicly, for reconciliation); yet none of them ever conceived that secret confession of every sin to a priest was an indispensable condition of salvation, or that it was invariably understood so to be by the whole Church from the days of our Lord and his Apostles, as asserted by the Council of Trent.

We have much more to say illustrative of the historical view of this important subject; but we fear we have already run the risk of wearying such of our readers as may not feel as intense interest in this matter as we do ourselves. We must, for the present, therefore, conclude this short historical sketch by giving a brief account of the abolition of the office of public Penitentiary, in the latter end of the fourth century, by Nectarius, Bishop of Constantinople, the immediate predecessor of St. Chrysostom, referred to in the letter of a "Northern Reader," inserted in our last number.

If there be any passage in ancient ecclesiastical history which seems to promise a satisfactory elucidation of the antiquity of the confessional, and a test by which to try whether it existed, in its present form, in the primitive Church, in a constant and uninterrupted succession, as alleged by the Council of Trent, it is this. And the story, on the joint testimony of the two ecclesiastical historians, Socrates and Sozomen, is as follows:—

"In the time of Nectarius, Bishop of Constantinople, there was, it seems, a custom in that Church (as also in most others), that one of the Presbyters, of greatest piety, wisdom, and gravity, should be chosen Penitentiary—that is, be appointed to the peculiar office of receiving confession, and assisting and directing penitents in the management of their penitence. Now, it happened that a certain woman of quality, stricken with remorse of conscience, comes to the penitentiary (that then was), and, according to custom, makes a particular confession of all such sins as she was conscious to herself to have committed since her baptism; for which he, according to his office, appointed her the penance of fasting and continual prayers, to expiate her guilt, and give proof of the truth of her repentance. But she, proceeding on very particularly in her confessions, at last, amongst other things, comes to declare that a certain deacon of that Church had defiled her; upon notice of which horrid fact (secrecy not being, we conclude, then enjoined in confessions), the deacon was (very properly) cashiered, and cast out of the Church; and the matter coming to the ears of the people, they presently fell into a mighty commotion and rage about it, partly in detestation of so foul an action of the deacon, but principally on account of the dishonour and scandal that reflected on the whole Church. The Bishop, Nectarius, finding the honour of the whole body of his clergy extremely concerned in this accident, and being very anxious both to extinguish the present flame and to prevent like occasions in future, resolved, by the advice of one Eudæmon, a presbyter of that Church, to abolish the office of penitentiary altogether; and now, says the historian, by this means every man is left to the conduct of his own conscience, and permitted to partake of the holy mysteries at his own peril."‡

This, we think, plainly shows that the office was not then considered a divine or apostolic constitution, but one created, as well as thus abolished, upon merely prudential considerations, as a matter of ecclesiastical discipline, and involving no sacramental considerations whatever. Sozomen adds, that the example of Nectarius was followed by almost all the bishops and Churches in the world; and Socrates, who was the first and principal relator of the whole story, states that he was personally acquainted with this

presbyter, Eudæmon, on whose advice Nectarius acted, in making this change in the discipline of the Church; and that he had the said relation of it from his own mouth, and expostulated with him about it, thinking that the state of piety would be much endangered by this change, and, in plain words, tells him that he had thereby bereft men of assistance in the conduct of their consciences, and hindered the great benefit men have, or might have, one of another, by private advice and correction.

We think this matter throws great light on the history of auricular confession, and disproves any such suggestion as has been sometimes made, without any good reason, that it was only public confession, and not private, which was, on this occasion, so generally laid aside; for, (not to go at present into many other coercive reasons to the same effect), we would ask, how could the abolition of one public functionary have bereft men of assistance in the conduct of their consciences, or left each of them to partake of the holy mysteries—i.e., the Holy Eucharist—at his own peril, if each was still bound, at that very time, sacramentally to confess and be absolved by a priest, as laid down by Pope Innocent III., in the Council of Lateran, A.D. 1215, and afterwards by the Council of Trent, A.D. 1551, in the canons, printed in full in our last number? see page 38.

We conclude that it is not true that the Catholic Church has always observed, from the time of our Lord and his apostles, the practice of confessing all sins secretly to a priest alone.

Whether the practice can be maintained by the authority of those texts of Scripture which are sometimes cited by Roman Catholic writers in favour of it, or whether the practice of auricular confession, as now used in the Church of Rome, be favourable or mischievous to practical piety, will form the subject of our future consideration.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

All letters to be addressed to the Editor, 9, Upper Sackville-st. No anonymous letter can be attended to. Whatever is sent for insertion must be authenticated by the name and address of the writer, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee for his good faith.

We would request our valued correspondents, both Roman Catholics and Protestants, to limit the length of their communications, and not to discuss a variety of distinct topics in one letter.

Contributors of £1 per annum will be furnished with six copies, any of which will be forwarded, as directed, to nominees of the subscriber. Any one receiving any number of the journal which has not been paid for or ordered by himself, will not be charged for it, and may assume that it has been paid for by a subscriber.

The Catholic Layman.

DUBLIN, MAY, 1853.

THE continuance and success of our paper, for nearly a year and a half, and the acceptance it has met with, both from Protestants and Roman Catholics, has proved some things that are worthy to be proved.

We conceived that it was possible, and that it was a Christian duty, too, that they who differ about religious truth should try whether a calm and Christian consideration of each other's arguments and opinions might not bring them nearer to an agreement in the truth. We were persuaded that a careful avoidance of all angry expressions, and a steady perseverance in kindly feelings, would change the common character of religious controversy. We did not expect that it would bring all to agree in the same opinion at once; but we did hope that, in a very brief time, it would prove that it is possible for those who sincerely differ, to discuss and examine those differences in a spirit of Christian love, and with a real desire to ascertain what the truth is, for themselves and others.

We were well aware that, in a time of great excitement about religion, when so many on each side are earnestly endeavouring to win over others to their side, such an attempt was peculiarly difficult; but then we saw, that for that very reason it was peculiarly necessary. All experience shows that man's passions are never so violent as when they are inflamed about religion. The greatest cruelties, the most terrible persecutions, and the most bitter hatreds that

the world has ever seen, have arisen from this cause.

Seeing, then, that extensive discussion and controversy was inevitable—that it was impossible to stop it, even if it were right to do so—we resolved to try if it were possible that discussion among Christians could be conducted in a Christian manner.

And though the task be difficult, we never doubted that it was possible; for this reason—it is a duty, and duties are always possible.

Neither were we without encouragement. Are we not all fellow-countrymen? Have we not a common country, suffering under heavy visitations, and needing our united efforts for her welfare? Can we unite for her good with hatred between us? Is it not our common interest to love each other? and should not even our differences be governed by love and not by hatred? Have not all the same heaven and the same hell set before us? Can we be indifferent to which of them ourselves and our neighbours are going? and will not a loving and a gentle treatment of each other's errors be the most hopeful method of advancing the progress, both of ourselves and others, towards the God of love?

These reflections had led us to a settled resolution, that in this journal, which we proposed to establish for religious discussion, we would labour to exclude every angry word, every thought of hatred, every approach of passion; that we would allow those only to write in our pages who love their neighbours souls, and who treat them in a spirit of love.

We trust it is in no spirit of idle boasting, but in a spirit of thankfulness, that we now ask our readers to consider how we have carried out our design. If any one of our readers can show us where we have offended them, or where our spirit needs to be corrected, we shall thankfully accept it at their hands.

We have ourselves, of course, more opportunity of learning the general effect already produced, than individual readers can often have. We receive numerous communications from Protestants, expressing their approbation of the spirit in which we write, and of our care to avoid offending their opponents. This seems to be our chief merit in the eyes of our Protestant friends. We also receive numerous communications from Roman Catholics, in various ways, expressing their satisfaction at the kindness and the fairness of our conduct. On both sides we find that our readers approve of the manner of religious discussion which it has been our object to promote. The existence of our paper for so long a time, and its present prosperous position, affords proof of this; for we could not continue to publish if we did not get extensive support, and acceptance and encouragement from both sides. And we find that we are daily advancing in public favour, which is conclusive that the public are pleased with discussion free from anger and strife.

Now, we ask our readers, on both sides, to consider the importance of this. If, through our means, the two great parties should come to regard each other rather as persons to be convinced with patience and meekness, than provoked by abuse and insult; if, by our means, they should come to understand that these feelings are mutual; if, by our means, they should come to understand and to view each other in this light, shall we not have done much for the peace and happiness of our common country, as well as for the promotion of Christian charity and Christian truth?

We invite the attention of all our contributors, and all our correspondents, and of all readers, too, to the importance of this object; and we ask the assistance of each of them in their several stations, in promoting it.

We are aware that this happy result is in pro-

* Chrysost. Hom. de penitent. et Confessione. tom. 5, Edit. Lat. Col. 501. Edit. Basil. 1558. Opera. tom. 12, p. 289.
† Augustin. Serm. 392. tom. 5, p. 184.
‡ Socrates, lib. 5, c. 19. Sozomen, lib. 7, c. 16.